Final Paper

University of Southern California Social Work:

Education, and Gerontology Library Services Internship

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Abstract

The following essay will recount my internship with the Education, Social Work, and Gerontology Library Services with the University of Southern California Libraries. USC Libraries was the chosen internship site because overall goals include working as an academic librarian. Not only was the type of library the reason for applying for the position, but the job description listed all the duties and responsibilities that initially inspired me to want to pursue a career in librarianship. Goals for this internship were to create a research guide, develop a lesson plan and present instruction, provide virtual reference services, and attend and participate in library meetings. Alyssa Brissett, site supervisor, provided library training and orientations that were self-directed, this was due to the internship consisting primarily of remote work, as a result of the COVID-19 due pandemic. Self-directed training provided opportunities to really familiarize myself with the library's policies and procedures. Though it was self-directed, Alyssa and I met bi-weekly, sometimes more, for check-ins to ensure accuracy, provide clarity and feedback on the activities. I was able to accomplish most of my MOU goals, except for the research guide – though it was published mostly finished, updates may be needed in the future. This internship has taught the importance of information literacy, collaboration, and facilitation of resources to library patrons and faculty.

Statement of Purpose

Memo of Understanding (MOU) Goals and Objectives

The Education, Social Work, and Gerontology Library Services are a part of the University of Southern California [USC] Libraries. USC is in Los Angeles, California; a private university that pursues excellence embraces diversity, equity, and inclusion, and the commitment to the development of the campus community ("Mission Statement," 1993). The mission of USC Libraries reinforces the goals of the university:

> "The USC Libraries actively supports the discovery, creation, and preservation of knowledge. We develop collections and services that support and encourage the academic endeavors of faculty, students, and staff; build a community of critical consumers of information; and help develop engaged world citizens" (USC Libraries Facts and Figures, 2021).

Education, Social Work, and Gerontology Library Services do not have physical library spaces, and most students in these programs are enrolled in online programs. Due to this, there is a need to maintain and provide access to resources online, such as research guides and Open Educational Resources (OER). With these library services being maintained by two librarians, there was a requirement for additional help – creating an opportunity for a student internship. Without the assistance of an intern, Social Work 544 would not have a course guide to aid students enrolled in this course. With a graduate student intern, the library was able to mitigate the research requirements and assemble the resources needed to build a course guide. USC Libraries was chosen as a place for the internship because I would like to pursue academic librarianship as my career. Working at a college library, I was exposed to subject librarians and

found my passion lay in their duties and responsibilities. The position description for Education, Social Work, and Gerontology Library Services listed goals and opportunities that would expand my knowledge while gaining the necessary experience to become a subject specialist. These experiences and the USC Librarian community have furthered my interest in academic librarianship and in working for this institution.

MOU goal/objective. Develop and apply acquired knowledge in facilitating access to library resources [through the development and assessment of research guides]. This objective was a collaborative effort between my site supervisor and myself. During preliminary discussions with Alyssa regarding internship activities, it was determined that the internship would require working on a semester-long project in developing a course guide. This objective was almost fully accomplished – due to misunderstandings about what should be included in a course guide, two subsections were left incomplete. The first milestone of this objective was to meet with the course lead to determine student needs for the class, along with any prevalent information. Once this was determined, a draft deadline was set. During that time, resources such as databases, books, and mappings to existing LibGuides were located that would provide students with the necessary resources required to successfully complete assignments.

MOU goal/objective. Demonstrate commitment to information literacy and instruction [assisting in developing instruction plans and conducting research consultations]. This objective, like the previous one, was established as a collaborative effort with the site supervisor. This objective was achieved by developing an outline, and presentation for a WRIT 150 class session. Progress was tracked in stages, the first was to develop an outline that contained the learning outcomes of both the assignment and the session, key points that were to be addressed, activities, and the allotted time for each. This was followed by creating activities to be completed by the

students during the session – an article activity and a guided search activity. The final step to reach this objective was to present the instruction to the class along with a guided search activity that provided the students with an opportunity to put into practice some of the research methods taught during the session[1].

MOU goal/objective. Establish and foster connections with the students, staff, and faculty in the social and behavioral sciences by participating in outreach and reference services. This objective was established collaboratively with the site supervisor. To establish and foster connections with the campus community, I participated in virtual reference. This meant monitoring the team email – tickets forwarded from LibChat, that were specific to the School of Education, Social Work, or Gerontology, or directly from students enrolled in these programs. Another form of virtual reference included assisting students in LibChat, under the supervision of Alyssa.

MOU goal/objective. Demonstrate commitment to professional development and collaboration. This final MOU objective was also the result of collaboration with the site supervisor. In addition to collaborating with Alyssa to establish goals for this internship and assembling the instruction for WRIT 150, this objective was fulfilled by engaging with library faculty and staff by attending committee and informational meetings. Progress was tracked by participation in meetings and following up with the site supervisor to discuss the meeting, its purpose, and overall understanding of the conversation.

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[1] See Brissett, A. & Moreno, C. (2021, October). *WRIT 150 library instruction session education and intellectual development.* [Google Slides]. Libraries, University of Southern California. https://archive.org/details/c-moreno-writ-150-library-instruction

Evidence for the MOU Goals and Objectives

Though multiple competencies were applied to the objectives achieved during the internship, two competencies stand out among them. First of which - Discovery, from the American Library Association's *Standards for Libraries in Higher Education,* which states "libraries enable users to discover information in all formats through effective use of technology and organization of knowledge" (ALA, 2018). This competency was fulfilled in the retrieval and organization of learning resources for students in Social Work 544[2]. Res. Resources were integrated into a course guide through the USC Libraries website for the effective discovery and to provide guidance (ALA, 2018).

The second most important competency demonstrated through this internship was Reference, as a part of Adult and Older Adult Services - Public Services Competencies from WebJunction's *Competency Index for the Library Field.* In assisting students with reference and research consultations, I was able to facilitate students' requests for information by effectively conducting reference interviews to identify their needs. This allowed me to demonstrate knowledge of online resources while ensuring that accurate and relevant information was provided (ALA,2018).

The Educational Role, in *Standards for Libraries in Higher Education*, allowed me to demonstrate a combination of collaboration, communication, and instruction in developing and supporting "information-literate learners who can discover, access, and use information

[2] See Moreno, C. (2021). *SOWK544: Clinical social work practice with individuals, families, & groups: Phases of treatment.* Research guides. https://libguides.usc.edu/SOWK544

effectively for academic success, research, and lifelong learning" (ALA, 2018), by instructing the class session for WRIT 150, in which I took on an educational role to gain experience.

Reference was also demonstrated in compiling information for the article activity that was to be used for the instruction session. In which I assembled resources to be evaluated by the students – the purpose of this was to discuss purpose, audience, context, and how they align with the prompt of the assignment. To locate resources, it was necessary to perform multiple search queries, using various resources, and strategies, ultimately demonstrating advanced search skills (Gutsche, & Hough, 2014).

Importance of the MOU Goals and Objectives

Demonstrating commitment to professional development and collaboration was exhibited as the cornerstone of the internship. This MOU objective proved to require effective and open communication. Without "effectively communicating using a variety of methods" (Gutsche & Hough, 2014), or working together to achieve the MOU objectives there would have been no professional relationship to allow the successful completion of projects. The lesson of open communication serving as a form of continuous learning will carry on into both my professional and personal life. Listening to your team's input and feedback there is an opportunity for innovation by generating new ideas, for a safer, more sustainable workplace that increases the probability of successful outcomes.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about unprecedented challenges to students, as a result, libraries needed to offer resources in multiple online formats that would provide students with options that would better suit their needs. This has made establishing and fostering connections via virtual outreach and references services of the utmost importance. In such an

uncertain time, and with emotions high, it is important to establish “rapport with information seekers quickly” (Gutsche & Hough, 2014). Building rapport in an approachable manner can determine what, and how much, information is provided by the student, and whether they decide to continue to seek virtual assistance. Gaining hands-on experience with research consultation and providing virtual references services via multiple platforms has shown me the importance of being able to navigate technology that supports the changing modes of information and resource discovery and the value of adapting to changes and challenges, quickly and effectively (ALA, 2018; Gutsche & Hough, 2014).

Conclusion

My main goal for this internship was to gain knowledge and experience in reference and instruction strategies. Having worked in positions across multiple library types, I have had the most experience at the academic level, though the work of a college library clerk does not translate over to the reference desk. The internship with Education, Social Work, and Gerontology Library Services allowed me to acquire competencies and obtain the experience required to lop foundational facets of librarianship. With the COVID-19 pandemic changing the way students interact with reference services, this internship provided me with real-time experience on how libraries learn to quickly adapt to the ever-evolving needs of their community.

During the internship with the USC Libraries, I was able to assist students via virtual reference, teaching me the value of providing students with access to resources from a distance. The journals and check-ins for this course helped me to realize that when librarians research, locate, and arrange the information onto a LibGuide, it provides students with a greater opportunity to successfully complete assignments. I learned the importance of strategizing and

organizing instructional materials, and how it gives the instructor the tools to reflect on the material to be properly prepared. These strategies ensure the material is formatted in a way that students will be motivated to focus, understand, and most importantly, remember the material.

Reflecting my experiences of interning with the Education, Social Work, and Gerontology Library Services using weekly journals, showed me how I can be a part of the momentous shift libraries are experiencing, to expand my knowledge of the emerging technologies in the field, and to understand what it is I want to do with my future. Opportunities such as this will provide incoming interns equal opportunity to grasp the challenges of the job, and the need to adapt to the evolving needs of the community, the importance of collaboration and communication, but most preeminently, learn how rewarding it is to fulfill the information needs of the campus community.

References

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